

CHILD ORAL HEALTH: SEALANTS

What are sealants?

Sealants are a thin, plastic coating painted onto the chewing surfaces of permanent teeth. They provide protection for your child's teeth by acting as a barrier to prevent cavities from damaging the teeth. Sealants are applied by dentists or dental hygienists.

Why does my child need sealants?

If your child has a history of cavities or is at risk for developing cavities, sealants can help. Because sealants form a protective barrier over the teeth, your child will be less likely to have cavities.

Does my child need sealants on all their teeth?

Sealants are applied to molars only. This is because molars have deep grooves that can trap food and the bacteria that cause cavities. Even though your child brushes his/her teeth, these grooves may still contain cavity-causing bacteria.

How are sealants applied to my child's teeth?

First, your child's tooth is cleaned and dried. Then the dentist or dental hygienist paints the plastic coating onto the chewing surfaces of the tooth. As the coating dries, the sealant becomes hard. Sealants are very quick to apply and don't cause any pain or discomfort to your child.



Tooth is cleaned.



Sealant is applied.



Sealant in place.

*Pictures from: *Seal Out Decay*, a publication of the National Institute for Dental and Craniofacial Research, National Institutes of Health.

How long will sealants last?

Sealants can last many years if they do not become chipped or damaged. Your child's dentist will check the sealants at each visit to make sure they are still intact. If any of the sealants are damaged, they are easily replaced.

BRUSHING TIPS FOR CHILDREN

Always use a soft-bristled, child or infant toothbrush.

Replace your child's toothbrush every three months.

Never allow your child to share toothbrushes, it spreads germs.

How to Brush Your Child's Teeth

- Place the toothbrush against the gum line at a 45-degree angle. Use a small circular motion to brush your child's teeth and gums.



- Brush back and forth on the chewing surfaces of your child's teeth holding the brush flat.



- Brush the back of your child's teeth.
- Brush your child's teeth after each feeding or at least two times a day. Be sure to brush at bedtime to remove bacteria that can cause decay while your child is sleeping.



CHECKLIST

Ask your child's dentist if sealants are right for your child.

Sealants help prevent cavities from forming on your child's teeth.

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FLOSSING TIPS FOR CHILDREN

Flossing cleans between the teeth where a toothbrush can't reach.

You can begin flossing your child's teeth as soon as any two teeth touch.

How to Floss Your Child's Teeth

- Wrap about 18 inches of floss around the middle fingers. Gently slide the floss between the teeth (don't snap the floss into the gums).



- As the floss reaches the gum line, make a C-shape around the tooth until you feel pressure against your child's tooth.



- Gently scrape the tooth surface with the floss.



- Move the floss as it becomes soiled and repeat the process for each tooth.



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